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A JOURNAL SENTINEL WATCHDOG UPDATE

State Dept. tracking blackouts

Agency had been under fire for response to deaths, injuries at Mexican resorts

Raquel Rutledge
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Officials with the U.S. Department of State are now tracking reports of blackouts and injuries related to potentially tainted alcohol in Mexico and said Friday they have already received a dozen complaints.

The agency has come under fire from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle in recent months for "underplaying" the risks to tourists traveling to Mexico and for not doing enough when U.S. citizens are injured or die while vacationing there. One U.S. senator called the department's response to tourist troubles in Mexico "disingenuous."

The announcement comes three days after the U.S. Office of Inspector General launched an inquiry into the agency's policies and procedures for handling those cases.

"We are concerned about reported incidents that the consumption of substandard or unregulated alcohol in some tourist areas in Mexico has resulted in illness or blacking out," said State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert, in a statement released Friday.

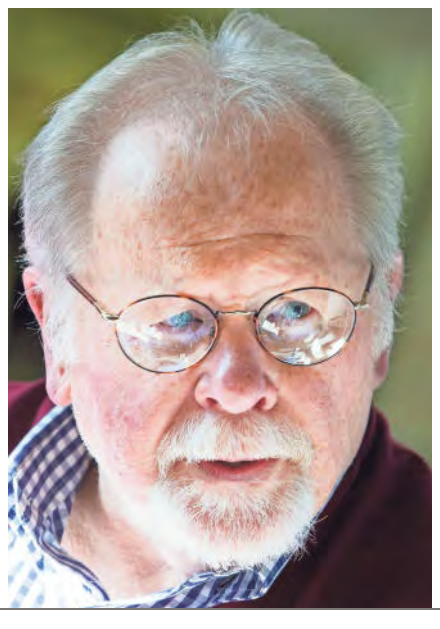
"We take our responsibility to provide safety and security updates to U.S. citizens very seriously. ... Following these reports and in consultation with our Embassy and Consulates in Mexico, on July 26, 2017, we updated our Country Specific Information for Mexico to provide information regarding unregulated alcohol concerns," the statement said. "Any U.S. citizen who falls ill should seek immediate medical attention. We also encourage U.S. citizens to contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Mexico."

See BLACKOUTS, Page 10A

U.S. Navy veteran Jonathan Brewer prepares to give a blood sample drawn by LeAnne Pomeroy on Thursday at the Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Milwaukee. The blood and health surveys filled out by veteran volunteers are for a landmark gene-mapping project. MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Veterans participate in genetic study

DNA, medical history stored at VA give researches plenty to work on



Bill Olcott is a participant in the Million Veteran Program. MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Meg Jones Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Almost two decades ago Jonathan Brewer stuck out his hand and recited an oath to join America's military.

On Thursday, Brewer again extended his hand, this time to donate enough blood to fill a tiny vial, about two tablespoons. In a way, Brewer is continuing to protect and defend. This time, he's helping his fellow veterans.

Brewer was among a few dozen veterans who stopped at a display for the Million Veteran Program set up at the south entrance of the Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center. The groundbreaking research project is collecting blood and biographical information, including family, health and employment histories.

Scientists are hoping to use the genetic information from Brewer and 1 million other American military veterans to study diabetes, cancer and other illnesses and understand how genes affect health.

Researchers know that health studies require a large number of volunteers, but it's often very difficult to find enough people to participate. And once the study is over, other researchers have to start the process over to find another sizable group of participants.

It turns out that veterans are the perfect study group because their decades-long health records, including lab tests, prescriptions and X-rays, are easily accessible throughout the VA medical system. They're folks who already volunteered to serve the nation and they tend to continue to volunteer after they leave the military.

"If you look at any other health care system, people hop from one (clinic) to another depending on their benefits," said Suma Muralidhar, a physician and director of the Million Veteran Program.

"With veterans, it's a stable population. Plus, they're altruistic. They look at this as another opportunity to serve the country. And because they're in the

See STUDY, Page 2A

$60M Foxconn deposit deadline missed

Representative calls it paperwork complication, says no one is concerned

Rick Romell
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

A deadline came and went Friday for Foxconn Technology Group to deposit $60 million into a special account as specified by its contract with Mount Pleasant and Racine County.

However, a representative of the local governments said the problem is only a minor wrinkle arising from the complications of preparing necessary paperwork to create the account.

The account is expected to be established and the money deposited within the next few days, according to a joint statement late Friday afternoon from attorneys for the village, the county and Foxconn.

> **"We are now working ... to establish the required Escrow Account. The funds will be deposited into the Escrow Account, as soon as it is established, which we anticipate before December 22."**
>
> **Letter from attorneys**

"All parties are on the same page," said the representative of the municipalities. "... Nobody has any concerns about it."

The representative asked not to be named because the local governments and Foxconn have agreed that all statements on the matter be jointly approved.

The $60 million is to be used by

See DEADLINE, Page 5A

Priest gets jail for sexual contact
A 76-year-old priest is sentenced to a year in jail for sexual contact with a girl. **3A**

Growing Power farm troubles
A bank is foreclosing on the urban farm of Growing Power. **8A**

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High 40° Low 27°
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